



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## *Office of the Governor*

Timothy M. Kaine  
Governor

October 18, 2007

### **GOVERNOR KAINE ISSUES STATEWIDE BURNING BAN**

#### **~ Declares statewide state of emergency ~**

RICHMOND - Governor Timothy M. Kaine today declared a statewide emergency and enacted a ban on open fires beginning Friday, October 19. The statewide burning ban is the result of drought conditions that have created a serious risk of widespread and dangerous forest fires in every region of the Commonwealth.

“We have looked at all the current data and reviewed the projections for the fall fire season, and everything points to a significant threat to public safety,” said Governor Kaine. “I have declared a state of emergency to exist within the Commonwealth to try to minimize the risk of forest fires that could threaten lives and property.”

The burn ban will remain in effect until existing weather conditions improve with significant rain or snow. Violation of the law is a Class 3 misdemeanor with a fine of not more than \$500.

Governor Kaine has authorized the Virginia National Guard to assist the Virginia Department of Forestry in fighting and mitigating the effects of wildfires. The Coordinator of Emergency Management, Secretary of Public Safety, Adjutant General of Virginia, the Commissioner of Health and the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services will coordinate efforts to provide assistance in dealing with potential or actual drought-related issues.

“Most areas in Virginia have not received adequate rainfall for several months. Rainfall deficits range from nearly six inches in the Richmond area to more than 14 inches in the mountains of Southwest Virginia,” said State Forester Carl E. Garrison III. “With such extremely dry conditions, any escaped fire would have the potential to become a major wildfire very quickly. And, since debris burning is already the number one cause of fires in Virginia, a prohibition on all burning will reduce the threat.”

The declaration does not have a direct impact on hunting season, but will prevent the use of warming or camp fires on all state-owned and privately owned lands in Virginia in addition to the prohibition on open burning.

Virginia has records which date back to 1925, and the 30 year average is 1,449 forest fires and 8,338 acres per year. The most fires in one year occurred in 1941 when 3,697 fires were fought. The most acres - 333,023 - burned in 1930.